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# Economic and Social Council

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**Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system**

## Statement by the Association tunisienne des mères, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* E/2004/100 and Corr.1 and Corr.2.

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More than 60 prominent persons, international experts and high-level representatives of civil society, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination/Non-Governmental Organizations Section and Division for Public Administration, Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States , the Arab Maghreb Union, the Arab International Women's Forum and the World Family Organization attending the International e-Gender Forum, organized by the Tunisian Mothers Association and its partners, adopted this Declaration of Tunis, which will contribute to the work of the Civil Society Forum of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis in November 2005.

## Declaration of Tunis

We, the participants in the International e-Gender Forum, on "The Impact of Information and Communication Technologies on the Advancement of the Rights of Women and Families: For a Digital Culture Without Exclusion", held in Tunisia at the Medina Mediterranea from 19 to 21 May 2004 under the distinguished patronage of Mrs. Leila Ben Ali, wife of the President of the Republic of Tunisia, and organized by the Tunisian Mothers Association in cooperation with its national, regional and international partners,

Considering the initiative taken in 1998 by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to organize a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) under the auspices of the United Nations,

Considering the establishment, as proposed by Tunisia, of the United Nations World Solidarity Fund aimed at closing the social gap between the countries of the North and the South by giving the global economy a human face,

Considering the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action, and particularly the affirmation by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, at its 47th session held in March 2003, of the importance of access and participation by women in the media and in information and communication technologies (ICT) for their empowerment,

Giving shape to the idea of initiating WSIS, of which the first phase was held in Geneva in December 2003 and the second phase will be held in Tunis in November 2005, in order to reduce the digital divide between the North and the South by ensuring access to ICT for all families, and in particular for women, who are the most disadvantaged in this regard,

Considering the Civil Society Declaration on "Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs" and the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted by the 175 States participating in the first phase of the Geneva Summit,

Responding to the appeal by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the active participation of civil society in the preparations for the Tunis Summit,

Hereby:

- Request WSIS 2005 to come up with specific measures for the empowerment of women and families so that young people may benefit fully from the

advantages of ICT, while seeking to protect them from the negative effects of the digital culture;

- Pledge to work with Governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations to provide the means necessary to share information equitably, exchange information on best practices with regard to ICT access and use, and ensure the advancement of families and specifically the promotion of gender balance in this field;

- Pledge to ensure that all members of the family benefit from ICT in order to share knowledge and expertise and to create a favourable environment for the full participation of women, mothers and youth in virtual spaces. This will reduce exclusion and build a foundation for a new era: the era of the information society that meets the needs of the population of each country, respects diversity and promotes a culture of peace;

- Pledge to ensure that ICT will be at the service of women's and family rights, strengthening digital culture within the family so that information and communication will become a global common good conferring benefits equitably on all members of the family: men, women, youth, the elderly, the disabled, the rich, the poor, and urban and rural populations whether in the North or in the South;

- Pledge to ensure access to ICT for disabled persons and all those with specific needs so as to facilitate their integration into active life and society;

- Request that national ICT policies be global, integrated, inclusive and locally implemented. They should be family-oriented and have a gender perspective. More specifically, at the community level, there is a need to ensure an appropriate ICT infrastructure and increased Internet access for rural families (for example, through e-caravans, digital solidarity and virtual spaces), in an effort to significantly reduce the digital divide;

- Pledge to ensure that the content of ICT, at the various levels of educational and community systems and the media, provides a flow of high quality, objective and balanced information. Media content must respect the plurality and diversity of voices, images and opinions that promote equity and justice between genders. Women must participate in decision-making on ICT access, content and governance. By building their ICT capacity, Arab women in particular should themselves be able to redress the negative impact of their distorted image as conveyed by most media;

- Pledge to establish international ICT regulatory mechanisms that respect fundamental values and ensure professional ethics in this field, allowing for progress towards sustainable development;

- Appeal to leaders of the world to work for sustainable peace in order to ensure security for women and their families, by encouraging their access to ICT and development and by setting up a mechanism for implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of this Forum on "The Impact of ICT on the Advancement of the Rights of Women and Families: For a Digital Culture Without Exclusion".